

## National Jewish Health Recommends Starting Your Spring Allergy Medicine on Valentine's Day

Allergens are in the air long before spring has sprung, especially as climate change continues to lengthen seasons.

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DENVER — Love isn't the only thing in the air on Valentine's Day. Spring allergens begin to build in the environment long before the flowers bloom and leaves return to the trees. That's why allergists at [National Jewish Health](#) in Denver recommend starting allergy medications in mid-February to give your body time to build resilience before you are exposed to allergens.



"Tree pollens are present in the air by March, and nasal steroids take two weeks to reach their peak effect," said [Flavia Hoyte, MD](#), an allergist and immunologist at National Jewish Health. "If you're exposed to pollen before that medication builds in your system, your symptoms may blindside you and you'll be left playing catch up."

Allergens cause a priming effect in the body, meaning the immune system is more sensitive to an allergen the more you're exposed to it. Without getting ahead of this priming and taking medication before you are exposed, symptoms often continue to worsen throughout the season. This leaves spring allergy sufferers miserable by summer.

Valentine's Day is a good milestone for many to begin taking spring allergy medications, especially in areas that have a true winter when many trees and plants are dormant. Recommendations vary for those in different climates. For example, in Texas, those with cedar allergies may struggle with symptoms as early as December due to the early growing season. And in warmer locations like Florida, allergy medications are often needed year-round.

Managing allergies is especially important as climate change lengthens allergy seasons. [Research reveals](#) that pollen levels are steadily increasing as spring begins earlier and fall ends later, giving plants more time to grow.

"Because allergies are causing symptoms for more days during the year due to these lengthening seasons, it's important to know exactly what you're allergic to so you can learn about the growing season for that allergen. This allows you to prepare ahead of time," said Dr. Hoyte. "Many people are miserable for weeks each year but are unable to pinpoint exactly what is causing their symptoms or when their allergy season will be each year. That's where allergy testing can be immensely helpful."

In the spring, tree pollen is mostly to blame for allergy symptoms. Then grass allergies flare in the summer and weed allergies in the fall. And while nasal steroid use should begin weeks before exposure, there are other medications that can help if your symptoms persist, such as antihistamines and nasal irrigation products.

There are also steps you can take to limit your exposure and ease symptoms. In the car, keep windows closed and set your air conditioning to recirculate the air inside to prevent mixing in allergens from outside. At home, close windows and doors to insulate your indoor environment from outdoor allergens, especially on high-pollen-count days.

“Washing your hands often can help you prevent transferring allergens from your hands to your nose and mouth. And if you’re experiencing symptoms while outdoors, it can be very helpful to leave those allergens outside and give yourself some relief by showering and changing into clean clothes when you get home,” said Dr. Hoyte. “It’s also a good idea to keep a close eye on [pollen counts](#) in your area and plan outdoor activities accordingly.”

**National Jewish Health** is the leading respiratory hospital in the nation. Founded 124 years ago as a nonprofit hospital, National Jewish Health today is the only facility in the world dedicated exclusively to groundbreaking medical research and treatment of patients with respiratory, cardiac, immune and related disorders. Patients and families come to National Jewish Health from around the world to receive cutting-edge, comprehensive, coordinated care. To learn more, visit the [media resources page](#).

## Media Contacts

Our team is available to arrange interviews, discuss events and story ideas.

**Jessica Berry**  
303.398.1082  
[berryj@njhealth.org](mailto:berryj@njhealth.org)